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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TUOMIOJA

REF: A. HELSINKI 144

[1](#)B. EMBASSY HELSINKI - PEKALA EMAIL 7 MARCH 2007
[1](#)C. WARE - PEKALA EMAIL 2 MARCH 2007

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Tuomioja to thank him for his helpful comments regarding the US missile defense initiative with Eastern Europe, but also to note her disappointment with other public comments he had made suggesting that the US made grave mistakes in Iraq and might now repeat those mistakes in Iran. Tuomioja thanked the US for sharing missile defense information with Finland and reaffirmed that Moscow's claims and threats were to be rejected. On the US in Iran, he noted that there is a widespread public fear in Europe that the US will resort to military action and that European politicians have a duty to respond to questions from voters. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Ambassador met with Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja and U/S for Political Affairs Markus Lyra March 7. She thanked the FM for his positive response to our recent demarche asking that he make a public statement to help calm the waters in response to baseless Russian claims and veiled threats regarding the US intention to place missile defense assets in the Czech Republic and Poland. (NOTE: A surprisingly helpful post appeared March 5 on Tuomioja's campaign web site -- see refs A and B).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Tuomioja thanked the US for sharing with the GOF information both on the missile defense initiative and on the extensive briefings Washington has offered Moscow. Tuomioja said he had not been asked on-the-record about the missile defense issue in either his official capacity or his role as a candidate in the current election campaign. Strategically, he noted, the non-threatening nature of the program vis--vis Russia was clear, and either baseless or threatening comments about the program were to be "rejected." He did note, however, that US missile defense has become a political question in the EU, with Austria having raised it during the March 5-6 GAERC. The Poles and Czechs responded adequately, he reported, and the GAERC agreed that the issue does not fall under EU competencies and should remain a bilateral one between the US and the governments concerned -- a judgment Tuomioja said he fully supports. He and the Ambassador also agreed that NATO would be a more appropriate forum for exchanges of information about the missile defense initiative.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Turning to less pleasant issues, the Ambassador strongly expressed disappointment with one of Tuomioja's recent campaign-trail statements. She pointed to the particularly unhelpful comments he made during an on-the-record debate before the Swedish-speaking press, in which Tuomioja said, "One can only hope that the Americans will not seek to correct their mistakes in

Iraq by making an even bigger mistake in Iran" (Ref C). The Ambassador noted that she understands the difference between an office-holder and a candidate, but suggested that comments such as this and other disagreements over policy should be discussed in private, not in the campaign context. The US remains committed to the diplomatic track in Iran, she added, and Europe and the US need to remain united.

15. (SBU) Tuomioja said he felt a duty to respond to Europeans' growing fears about the possibility that Washington will resort to military strikes against Iran. "This is a recognizable and significant concern in Europe," he said; it is reasonable to expect that worried voters will demand answers from their leaders -- and their candidates -- on an issue like Iran. "I have always said it is not helpful to talk about a military option" in Iran, Tuomioja continued, "and I am not alone." He noted that EU leaders have consistently voiced that same concern, and the EU Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their unanimity in support of following the UN process at the March GAERC. The Ambassador reminded Tuomioja that the US is committed to the diplomatic track both by its public comments and actions; he welcomed that assurance.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the conversation addressed areas of disagreement, the overall tone was cordial; Tuomioja was open and occasionally expansive, offering views on a range of other issues, including his party's chances for success in the upcoming parliamentary election (septel). Although he did not promise the Ambassador he would keep differences of opinion over policy within diplomatic channels, he did welcome the Ambassador's suggestion for more frequent face-to-face exchanges, should he be designated Foreign Minister following the election. END COMMENT.
WARE